

NEWS

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Smiths to make £10k shop loans

Smiths News is to offer interest-free loans of up to £10,000 to help independent retailers improve their stores.

The news wholesaler will make cash available for customers to spend with approved suppliers of refrigeration units and display racks for news, magazines and confectionery.

The loans form part of Smiths' shop development programme and repayments will be deducted from weekly news bills.

Field sales controller Nick Scraggs said: "The long-term benefit of installing the latest environmentally-friendly and cheap-to-run refrigeration systems in your store is that it's an investment that will pay dividends."

One retailer who has already benefited is Carol Birnie, of Ashley Stores in New Milton, Hampshire.

"Feedback from our customers has been good and we are hoping to sell more products," she said.

But another retailer told RN that the scheme did not address problems within the industry.

Duncan Finlayson, of the Papershop in Honiton, Devon, said: "I'm sure there will be those who are interested, but whether they could afford the repayments is a different matter."

An accolade for Parfett's

Stockport-based family firm Parfett's received a special accolade at last week's Federation of Wholesale Distributors' Gold Medal Awards.

The award for contribution to the wholesale sector went to Alan, Steve and Robert Parfett, who set up the business, which now boasts six depots, in 1980.

ACS warns of 'clone town' Britain

The Association of Convenience Stores says local councils need powers to stop Britain turning in to a succession of "clone towns".

It said localism reform had not gone far enough to allow communities to control the mix of retailers on high streets.

The ACS said it was

backed by 77% of MPs it had polled.

Chief executive James Lowman said: "We are calling for new powers that would allow communities to set out their vision for the retail mix they want to achieve in their area and, once agreed, councils could use planning powers to restrict local dominance of

one type of business."

The plea was made at the ACS Heart of the Community Conference in London last week and forms part of a three point plan to drive investment back in to the high street.

The proposal also calls for the government to abandon its plans for a 5.6% increase on business rates

and recognise the importance of town centres in its draft National Planning Policy Framework.

Shadow communities secretary Hillary Benn told the conference he agreed that planning policies should include a "competition test" to protect small retailers from supermarkets.

Report says claimants will still be waiting next March NFRN Mutual support appreciated

Riot-hit retailers are still waiting for compensation

by Ed Chadwick

Thousands of riot-hit retailers are still waiting for compensation following summer disturbances, according to a report.

The Riots, Communities and Victims Panel said visits to cities worst affected by the disorder had so far found nobody who had received payment under the 1886 Riot Damages Act.

More than 5,700 businesses in London, the Midlands, Manchester and Bristol have submitted claims.

But in a 111-page report, the panel forecast that, by next March, half of the smaller claims and 90% of

larger claims would still be outstanding.

It also raised concerns about the speed of insurance claims being settled.

"Shopkeepers lost everything they had built up over years," said the report. "The consequences of the riots are still being felt."

However, not every riot-hit retailer is still out of business. Raxika Patel's shop was transformed from a glass-strewn casualty (right) to a thriving newsagent within three weeks after NFRN Mutual came to her rescue.

Just a few days after stumbling across a scene of devastation at her Surrey News shop in Croydon on

10 August, the federation's insurance associate was able to write her an interim cheque.

Heartbroken Mrs Patel was telephoned by the Mutual the following day and visited by a loss adjuster.

She was paid an almost instant interim settlement of around £15,000, which allowed her to open for business and has now received a total of £39,000 for damage.

"I can't fault the service and the support the Mutual has provided," she said. "I know other traders on the high street are still struggling because they are waiting for money from insurers or the riot funds."



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Having lived here all my life, I know so many people. It's nicer to serve and be served by someone you know

Richard Clutterbuck
Retailer, Llanishen, Cardiff

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Raxika Patel back behind the counter of her refurbished Croydon store